



DC COMMISSION ON THE ARTS & HUMANITIES

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT
SUBMITTED BY HERAN SEREKE-BRHAN, PhD
APRIL 25, 2022

* Agency Development*Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access*Improved Grantmaking* Community Engagement*CAH Beyond Grants*

The following is a summary of the agency's activities and operations:

Agency Development: Welcoming New Staff

CAH welcomes two new staff members to our Public Arts team.

Deirdre Darden is an independent curator born and raised on art in Washington DC. She began her curatorial practice in 2014 with Black Artists of DC. Since then, she has exhibited and collaborated with contemporary artists from DC, Baltimore and New York, organized panel discussions and artist talks touching themes of race, womanhood, societal pressures, and art's ultimate power.

New to CAH, **Kerry Kennedy** has experience in Public Art, Museum Management, Historic Preservation, Heritage Tourism, Performance, Art Education, Grant Administration and Community Development. Kerry's interests are focused on providing art-based solutions and her passions range from working in Public Art Programs, Museums, Botanical Gardens, Historic Buildings, to Performing Arts and Community Development Organizations.

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (I.D.E.A.): Arts Education Program Series

CAH's Arts Education department will host seven virtual programs between April 27 and May 17, 2022, on various topics exploring Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (I.D.E.A.) in Arts Learning and Arts Education settings. Featured speakers are Dr. Durrell Cooper (founder, Cultural Innovation Group, LLC), Alysia Lee (artist, educator, and advocate) and Diane Nutting (accessibility and inclusion consultant). Topics include discussing bias and intersectionality, design intentionality and I.D.E.A., activating principles of racial equity in arts learning, and best practices of inclusion in arts education settings. All programs are free and open to the public, registration information is available on CAH's website or [here](#).

Community Engagement

Modeling Mentorship in the Arts: A Case Study

On March 29, 2022, CAH kicked off its sixth community engagement program and the first in the Artists Showcase series by commemorating World Theatre Day with a discussion on mentorship in the arts titled 'Modeling Mentorship in the Arts: A Case Study.' The session offered an insider's look by Tristan B. Willis, co-founder and director of Theatre Washington's Mentorship program, who shared insights on the importance of cultivating a community of support for individuals and institutions in the performing arts.

Since January 2022, CAH has conducted five virtual community engagement programs on themes of copyright, trademarking and legal protections for artists and creators (in partnership with the Washington Area Lawyers for the Arts); partners and participants in CAH's *Create and Thrive!* arts program for older adults and a presentation on CAH's grants panel process with staff

and former grantee discussants. Thus far about 300 participants have attended the sessions.

Public Art: *Resilience and Uncertainty* Exhibition Closing

On April 14, 2022, CAH hosted a closing program for its FY22 Arts Exhibition Grant project *Resilience and Uncertainty* curated by Julio Valdez at its 200 I Street gallery on Friday, April 14, 2022. Chair Van Lee and ED Sereke-Brhan welcomed guests and shared remarks noting the importance of the arts in building and sustaining a sense of purpose and joy in challenging times. The program featured local musician Eric Maring who was joined by bassist Dan Griffen to share works from his latest album, 'The Year of Seeing Clearly.' In attendance were Commissioners Barry, Torres and Younger and D.C. Council Chair Phil Mendleson along with participating artists Dominie Nash, Felix Angel and CAH staff.

The exhibition, which featured six artists from DC and New York with roots in Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti, has received positive reviews and responses in local media and in news sources in the Dominican Republic and Colombia. Public programming for the exhibition included a guided tour by participating artists, a virtual poetry reading and a printmaking workshop.

Studio Theatre Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

Chair Van Lee, Executive Director Sereke-Brhan, Deputy Director David Markey and Grants Manager Kevin Hasser attended a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Studio Theatre on Thursday, March 31, 2022, marking the end of facility renovations and the opening of Victor Shargai Theatre, named for the late theatre promoter. Chair Van Lee noted CAH's continued support of the \$20 million renovation project and the importance of the arts in reviving communities and contributing to economic recovery. D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser, D.C. Council member Brooke Pinto (D-Ward 2), CEO of Events DC Gregory O'Dell, Studio Theatre leadership, funders, and members of the Studio steering committee all shared remarks.

48th Annual DC History Conference

ED Sereke-Brhan, Senior Grants Officer Terrell Johnson and Grants Manager Kamanzi Kalisa participated in the 48th Annual DC History Conference, an interdisciplinary, community conference considering the past, present and future of the District which took place at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Library from March 31 to April 2, 2022. Individual presentations, panel discussions and group conversations were focused on the two conference sub-themes - the history of art and culture and of education.

CAH provided informational materials to participants and co-hosted a presentation with HumanitiesDC Director Rebecca Lemos-Otero titled 'Showcasing History with the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities and HumanitiesDC: Lightning Round Presentation' featuring four shared grantees: Beverly Lindsay Johnson (The Nation's Capital: Doo-Wop from Street Corner to the Stage Documentary), Kim Bender (Heurich House Museum), Stephanie Fry (Capital Jewish Museum) and Sami Miranda (*La Manpleza* Documentary). Co-presented by the DC History Center and the DC Public Library, the conference is sponsored by the Graduate Program in Public History at American University and supported by a grant from HumanitiesDC.

National Poetry Month Program

On April 20, 2022, ED Sereke-Brhan, Senior Grants Officer Terrell Johnson and Grants Manager Kamanzi Kalisa attended a program at CAH grantee President Lincoln's Cottage titled 'Poetry in Dialogue' featuring two District poets and FY22 Arts and Humanities Fellows, Natalie Illum and Alexa Patrick. ED Sereke-Brhan offered welcome remarks.

CAH Beyond Grants

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies: Dues Task Force

ED Sereke-Brhan is currently serving in the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA's) Dues Task Force tasked with reviewing NASAA's multi-year membership dues plan and develop recommendations for the 2022 dues structure. The dues plan is centered on values of equity, predictability, transparency and simplicity and funds support NASAA's core programs and services.

August 2022 Mid-Atlantic Teaching Artists Virtual Retreat

Scheduled to take place in August 2022, the third bi-annual gathering of the Mid-Atlantic Teaching Artists Virtual Retreat will bring together arts education professionals from across the region to strengthen and promote networks. Along with national counterparts in arts education, CAH's Arts Education staff members Alorie Clark and Camille Ashford are part of the steering committee tasked with leading and designing this year's program. Participating State Arts Agencies include Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia. This is the first year CAH is participating in this professional development opportunity and contributing towards covering event expenses.

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